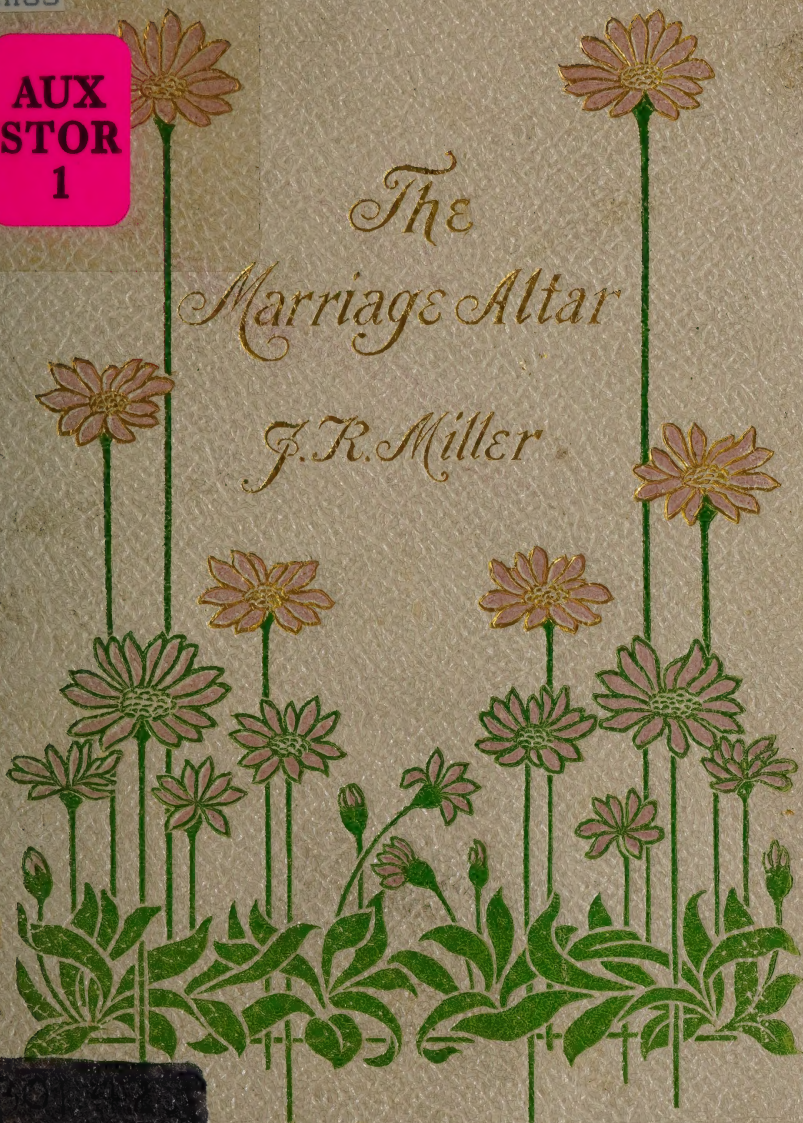


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*The
Marriage Altar*

J. R. Miller.



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THE

MARRIAGE ALTAR

BY

J. R. MILLER

AUTHOR OF "THINGS TO LIVE FOR," "SILENT TIMES,"
"MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE," ETC.

*"The bond that links our souls together,
Will it last through stormy weather?"*

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FOREWORD.

PERHAPS these simple chapters may prove helpful to some young people who are settling the question of marriage; or possibly they may have their suggestions for some who are already married, and are trying to learn the secret of living happily together.

In this new edition the book has been revised and entirely re-written, and in many parts is altogether new.

THE MARRIAGE ALTAR.

I.

CHOOSING A WIFE.

ON no other subject do young people need wise, loving counsel more than in choosing for marriage. One reason is that it is possible to make a mistake. Not every marriage is happy. Of all mistakes this is one of the saddest, for it is irretrievable. If a man does not like his house, he can move out of it. If your companions are not congenial, you can drop them. But when you have taken the marriage vows there is no honorable release.

A wise marriage leads a man to the noblest, truest, fullest, and best life. Thousands of men owe all their success and prosperity to their choice of a wife. She has been the good angel of their destiny. There is a fable of a lump of common clay which was made fragrant by the rose which rested beside it. Countless men of common mould have been transformed into rare beauty, refinement, and grace of character, by the gentle woman whom they were so blessed as to find

for a wife. A wise man wants a wife who will make something of him, whose influence will ever inspire him to do his best.

Of course a man must marry the woman he loves. It will not do to look merely for the qualities which make a good wife, and then, without affection, or any leading of the heart, "choose" her. At the same time there is room for the exercise of common sense in this as in all other decisions of life. Too many men make the mistake of following only their heart's guidance, and learn too late what fools they were. God has given us a mind as well as a heart, and we are responsible for thought as well as for feeling. Without love, marriage is a mockery; yet a man should be sure that the woman he loves is worthy.

What are some of the qualities of a worthy wife?

For one thing, a man does not want a mere toy wife, something too fine, too ethereal, for this work-a-day world. She should be a woman who can bear her share of the burdens, who can endure toil and sacrifice, and grow all the lovelier meanwhile. Wordsworth's picture is good:—

A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food.

.

The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command,
And yet a spirit still and bright
With something of an angel light.

The wife a man chooses should be a good house-keeper. To some romantic young lovers this will seem a very prosaic feature to put into the picture. They are moving just now in a sort of third-heaven atmosphere, in which such matters as housekeeping seem almost profane. But never mind; they will not be many weeks married before they will come down out of the clouds to walk on common earth, and then alas, if the poor woman does not prove a good housewife!

An ancient philosopher, roaming at night, and gazing at the sky while he walked, stumbled and fell. His companion said to him, "One should not have his head in the stars while his feet are on the earth." There are women who live in sentimental dreams, among the stars, neglecting meanwhile the duties which lie close to their hands. It may be set down as a positive rule, whether in palace or cottage, that the wife whose home will be happy and permanently beautiful must know how to work with her own hands at the commonplace, housewifely tasks which the days bring to her. Good breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, good bread, good coffee, in a word, good housekeeping — far more than many young lovers dream does wedded happiness depend upon just such unromantic realities as these.

One of St. Paul's special counsels for young women is that they be "keepers at home," as our common version renders it, and that is good too; but in the Revised Version it reads "workers at home." That is, the place for a young wife's most sacred duty is in

her own home. No doubt women have a wide field for Christlike usefulness in ministering to human need and sorrow outside; but in performing such ministries, however beautiful and noble, a wife should never neglect her divinest duties, — those which lie within her own doors. A young man in choosing a wife would better seek one, a prominent feature of whose piety it is to be a good housekeeper and homemaker.

Another suggestion is, that in choosing a wife a man should look for a woman of sweet temper. It is said that a young man wrote to Mr. Wesley asking his advice concerning marriage. There were two girls. One was gentle, loving, patient, sweet-spirited, but not a professing Christian. The other was a church-member and active in Christian work, but fiery-tempered. Which would Mr. Wesley advise him to marry? Promptly came the answer, “The woman of the loving disposition.”

Nothing else can take the place of love in a home; nothing else can supply its lack. There are many women who have so much of the spirit of love and gentleness that they fill their home as with the fragrance of heaven and the calm and peace of God. With husbands faulty, sometimes exacting, unreasonable, arbitrary, and petulant; with the many burdens and cares of the household filling brain, hand, and heart, and oftentimes well-nigh crushing their frail shoulders, — these noble wives move on day by day, month by month, unvexed in spirit, unfretting, gentle, patient, uncomplaining, wearing always a bright face,

bright with the benediction of love, speaking always sweet and quieting words, and shedding ever over all their home-life the sacred influences of a ministering affection.

Let the young man who is seeking a wife seek for a girl who has in her face and spirit the sweet, budding prophecy of such a womanhood as this. Then he will make no mistake in marriage. His wife will do him good and not evil all the days of her life; and if she should be taken from his side, her epitaph may fitly be in Whittier's words: —

The blessing of her quiet life
Fell on us like the dew;
And good thoughts, where her footsteps pressed,
Like fairy blossoms grew.

Sweet promptings unto kindest deeds
Were in her very look;
We read her face as one who reads
A true and holy book,

The measure of a blessed hymn
To which our hearts could move;
The breathing of an inward psalm,
A canticle of love.

A young man should desire for his wife a woman who will be in perfect sympathy with his life. If he marries a woman who regards herself as above him, too good for his station, or ashamed of his occupation or business, she will probably not make him happy. Or if she has no interest in the things that are dear to him, no sympathy with him in the objects to which

his life is devoted, she will not be a helpful wife. It is important that in marrying there should be a complete blending of lives and interests. A true wife must ever look up into her husband's face with confidence and pride. She must care for the things for which he cares. She must stand by him, not only when he is prosperous, but just as loyally and affectionately when burdens press and cares multiply, and when his heart is heavy with discouragement. If she fails him then, if she blames and chides him because things are not going well, it makes his struggle ten times harder; but if she meets trouble with strong faith, adverse circumstances with abounding hope, and loss of money with cheerful courage and ever-gentler love, he is an ignoble man if he does not grow braver and stronger in the midst of his difficulties.

In choosing a wife, therefore, a wise young man will seek for one who will enter with zest into all his life, who will stand close beside him in the day of struggle and adversity, and who will ever inspire him to noble and brave things.

Once more, it needs no argument to prove that a young man should choose none but a good woman for his wife. A worldly man may imagine that he does not want a pious wife; but if the truth were confessed, even such a man, down deep in his heart, would rather have for his wife a woman who reads her Bible, prays, and lives a godly life, than one who is prayerless, godless, and worldly. Religion adorns and beautifies a woman's character, clothing it with tender grace. Even a prayerless man feels safer in

his home if he knows that his wife kneels morning and night before God in prayer.

Isaac sent Jacob away from home that he might not marry a Canaanite woman. Any young man would better go to the ends of the earth, if necessary, in search of a wife, than marry a Canaanite, or any but a truly good woman, one who loves God, and in whose heart God's love dwells. If he marry such a wife, they can kneel together on their marriage night at the feet of Christ, and seek his benediction upon their union. Then together they can walk through this world hand in hand, sustained by divine grace, comforted in sorrow and strengthened in weakness, their faces ever looking heavenward, and brightened by the hope of glory that streams down from the pearl gates. Then even death will separate them but for a little while, and together they will ever be with the Lord.

II.

CHOOSING A HUSBAND.

SOME one may say, "But a woman does not choose her husband. She waits to be chosen, and can do no more than accept or refuse." Yet the woman is to be pitied who marries a man whom her heart does not choose from among all men. If she is doubtful upon this point, she is not ready to marry.

There is something very sacred, almost awe-inspiring, in the act by which a woman, at her entrance into the marriage state, confides all the interests of her life to the hands of him whom she accepts as her husband. She leaves father and mother and the home of her childhood; she severs all the ties that bind her to her old life; she gives up the friends and friendships of her youth; she cuts herself off from the sources of happiness to which all through her years she has been accustomed to turn; she looks up into the face of him who has asked her to be his wife, and with trembling heart, and yet with quiet confidence, intrusts to him and his keeping all the sacred interests of her life.

It is a holy trust which a man receives when a noble woman thus commits herself to his keeping. It is the life-long happiness and well-being of a gentle heart, capable of ineffable joy or of unmeasured misery. It is the whole earthly future of a life which may be fashioned into the beauty of Christ, or marred, its beauty forever shattered.

Will he be faithful to the holy trust reposed in him? Will he love this confiding wife with an undecaying love? Will he shelter her from the blasts, protect her in the day of peril, and deal tenderly with her at all times? Will he seek her highest good, and help her to build up in herself the truest and noblest womanhood? Will he be to her an inspirer of whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely? Is this man who holds her hand worthy to receive into

his keeping all that her confiding love lays so cheerfully at his feet?

It is in this way that every thoughtful woman must inquire concerning the man who asks her hand in marriage. To rush heedlessly, without thought or question or prayer, into the marriage state — who can characterize the folly, the peril, of such trifling, such presumption?

What are some of the qualities which a woman should demand in the man whom she accepts as her husband?

He should be a good provider. This is not saying that he should be rich. It is often asserted in these days that young men cannot afford to marry, since young women expect to begin where their parents leave off, and that to support them in the luxury they expect is beyond the ability of most young men. This should not be true. It is better every way to begin plainly. The mutual sharing of burdens and sacrifices draws hearts together, and knits lives more closely. Besides, there is a perpetual charm in an ever-growing home — something new added every year. Many of the happiest marriages this world ever saw found their first nest in one plain room, with only scant furniture.

It is not necessary that a man be rich to be a worthy husband. He may be a poor man, but he should have something besides poverty to commend him. He should have a brave heart, and two strong hands trained to do something worth while, and ready ever for hard tasks. He should have an occupation,

and a position which may reasonably be depended upon to yield a comfortable living.

He should be industrious, and not self-indulgent. A woman ought to have no "Yes" for answer to a proposal of marriage from a lazy man, — a man who has no fixed occupation, a man who only eats the earnings of a hard-working father or mother, and goes about the streets with his cane and cigarette, playing the fine gentleman. The girl who will marry such a man is a poor, silly creature. He will never be any comfort to her.

In the marriage vow a husband promises to love and to cherish the woman who puts her hand into his. She should have reasonable confidence that he will keep his vow.

A man fit to be accepted as a husband should have good habits. They say "Love is blind." But it is very unfortunate if love's blindness prevents a woman's seeing the evil habits in the man who asks for her hand.

"But he is going to give up his loose habits when he is married."

Is he? He says he will — possibly he thinks he will. Yet the records of life are most discouraging to those who would like to build their hopes of happiness on such promises of amendment. It is a perilous thing for a gentle-hearted woman, who has never felt a chill breath of unkindness, to unite her life in marriage with a man whose habits can only wreck her happiness and break her heart, on the mere promise that after he is married he will reform. If he

will not give up his evil habits for the sake of the beautiful girl he seeks to win, will he be likely to do so for the sake of the woman he has already won?

The natural tendency of evil habits is not to wear themselves out, but to grow in strength — spiders' threads to-day, cables to-morrow; a single glass now and then, at present; after awhile drunkenness and debasement, and the wreck of all that is worth living for.

The man a woman accepts for a husband should be a man also of gentle, affectionate disposition. I know a man should be strong; a woman loves strength. But the noblest strength is also the most divinely gentle. Courage is poor comfort for a suffering woman who knows only tyranny, rudeness, brutality, in her home. True courage is gentle as a mother. Wedded life can bring happiness to a wife only if she find lovingness in the man to whom she intrusts the sheltering of her life.

Mrs. Carlyle said, "I married for ambition; Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him — and I am miserable." She married a genius, and got a man who broke her heart by his churlish tyranny. The world praised him, and wrote his name high up on fame's column; but what comfort was that to the gentle woman who was crushed by his miserable tyranny?

The ideal man is brave — courage is one of the finest things in manliness. Truth is another noble quality. Strength is a manly attribute. So is uprightness. But if a man is brave and true and strong

and upright, and yet is not gentle, he lacks one of the essential things in manly character.

We recognize this in the name which we give to a man who is refined, who has a full-rounded character, who realizes the best type of manhood. We say he is a gentleman; that is, a man with a gentle heart, a kindly spirit, an affectionate disposition. Some one says that a gentleman is a man who will never cause another pain, never do anything which will hurt another's feelings. This includes thoughtfulness; it is want of thought that causes much of the wretchedness which human lives make for each other. A gentleman is thoughtful.

None but a true gentleman will ever make a good husband. A woman needs for her husband a man who will take her mother's place in her life in tenderness, in patience, in kindliness; one to whom she will never fear to go when her heart is sore; one who will be a comfort in sorrow, whose love will be to her like the very love of Christ.

St. Paul teaches that a husband should love his wife even as Christ loved the church. That is, he should be as Christ to his wife, — loving her with utter unselfishness, and ministering to her with gentlest affectionateness. Such a man every true-hearted woman should rightly expect to find in him whom her heart chooses as husband.

Once more, a woman should seek for her husband a man who will help her to grow by his side into the loveliest, truest womanhood. Countless women have inspired their husbands with noble aspirations which

have led to most worthy life. But a husband should also be to his wife a true helpmate. The aim of his life should be not merely to provide fine things for her to wear and luxuries for her home, but to help her toward higher culture, to adorn her mind, to cultivate her character, and refine her spirit. If he is reaching up to new knowledge and power, he should be unwilling to leave her behind him.

Every true husband's yearning for his wife may be expressed in the words which George MacDonald puts into the lips of one of his characters:—

For God's sake, be as beautiful
As the white form that dwelleth in my heart;
Yet better still, as that ideal pure
That waketh in thee when thou prayest God,
Or helpest thy poor neighbor.

Justify my faith
In womanhood's white-handed nobleness,
And thee, its revelation unto me.

The man a good woman is willing to marry should be one whose influence over her is such as will draw out all the best possibilities in her life, helping her indeed to be the noblest, most beautiful woman she can become.

III.

SECRETS OF WEDDED HAPPINESS.

THE happy day has come. The man and the woman who have chosen each other as wife and as husband

stand at the altar. Taking the woman's hand, the man says to her, "I take thee to my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth." Taking the man's hand the woman says to him, with slight variations, the same words. Then they twain, pronounced one, go forth, to begin their wedded life together.

How can they make their marriage a truly happy one? It can be done; it ought to be done; it will be done, unless one or the other or both shall fail in keeping the sacred covenant. How can it be done?

One suggestion is that the love and the loving ways of the wooing days must be carried over into the life of the wedded days. Why is it that so many married people, when the honeymoon is over, drop all the arts of love by which they won and held each other in affection's thrall before marriage? The young husband comes in tired, and leaves at the door his affectionateness, sometimes even his good manners. He takes no pains to be agreeable, much less tender. A husband should be as affectionate to his wife, even when both are gray-headed, as he was to the girl when he was trying to win her.

This rule applies also to a wife. You remember how you used to watch for your lover, how cordially you always greeted him, how charming you made his stay. Do you watch now for his steps when he comes home? Do you greet him with the old tenderness?

Another secret of wedded happiness is for husband and wife to maintain close communion of spirit. They should talk together daily on all matters of common interest. No doubt silence is golden at times, but even silence may be overdone. It was a wise saying of Franklin's, "As we must account for every idle word, so must we account for every idle silence." Some husbands and wives have too many idle silences together. It is said that married people can be identified as such on railway trains by their silence as they travel side by side. At home, too, when alone, many a husband and wife sit through meals and pass whole evenings with scarcely a word passing between them. They act as if they were dumb.

When two persons are united in love, and have so many sacred interests in common, why should they not talk together of their affairs, of their home, of the books they are reading, of their spiritual joys and hopes, of their relation to God and to duty? Why should they not speak out from their full, loving hearts the sacred words of affection which so often tremble unspoken on their lips?

On the other hand, there is also a lesson of keeping silence which must be learned. It is better not to speak than to speak angrily, impatiently, bitterly. The Cary sisters had a rule, it is said, that if either of them was in ill humor from any cause, and disposed to be irritable, she went to her own room, and stayed there until the unhappy mood had passed off. This would be a good rule in wedded life.

Then there is another way : If one of the parties is evidently out of sorts, in an irritable mood, disposed to be easily ruffled, let the other not only avoid any word or act which would naturally excite, but besides, call into play all genial, kindly arts to soothe and heal and quiet the perturbed spirit. If something has gone wrong with the husband, for example, and he appears to be vexed, touchy, or cross, let the wife put on all her charms of loving grace to sweeten the air. If the wife is tired, nervous, and sensitive, let the husband use all of affection's arts to make it easy for her to keep sweet.

Another secret of happiness in wedded life is for husband and wife never to speak harshly or unkindly the one to the other. There is a theory that faithful friendship requires us to tell our friends of their faults ; but no service of friendship requires more delicacy, and there are few cases in which the service can be safely rendered. Certainly nothing does more to mar the sacredness of wedded life than indiscriminate fault-finding.

There is a better way of curing faults than by ceaseless, fretful nagging, — the way of love. Husband and wife must learn to bear with one another's infirmities as well as bear one another's burdens. There is no relation in which there is greater need of patience than in wedded life. Neither party is perfect ; both have need of love's indulgence.

By wise treatment faults may be transformed into elements of beauty and strength. Thus it is that Christ deals with our faults, when we put them into

his hands; thus, too, should we seek to deal with the faults of our friends. But the critical, censorious way tends only to exaggerate the blemishes and aggravate the evils assailed.

Another secret of happiness is for husband and wife never to speak to any one outside of the other's faults or frailties. Any man with good eyes can see things even in his own wife which he would have otherwise. Any bright woman can readily detect in her husband, on close acquaintance, traits, habits, or little ways that are not beautiful. But true love covers a multitude of sins and faults. They must be patient, not taking too careful note of blemishes, but especially should each seek to hide the other's infirmities or faults from the outside world. They should at least never speak of these faults, even to dearest friends.

Some married people are indiscreet in this matter. It is wiser by far to keep the lips sealed concerning marital infelicities of any kind. No third person should ever hear anything unkind from one of a married pair concerning the other. What goes on in your home is only your own affair and God's. To tell it to the hungry gossips is to set fire to your own nest.

Another secret of wedded happiness lies in both parties being ready always to give up their own way. One man asked another why he and his wife were forever disagreeing. "Because we are both of one mind," the other replied; "we both want our own way." Measureless trouble in marriage has come out of obstinate pride. The relation between husband

and wife can never be settled by rules. Love seeketh not its own. It never is tyrannical. See our Master, with basin and towel, washing the feet of the disciples who themselves were too proud and unloving to do the humble service one for another. They are greatest who serve most fully and sweetly. Marriage can be made happy only by mutual obliteration of self.

These words may be read by some who are somewhat disappointed in the happiness they are finding in wedded life. But when a Christian man and woman are united in marriage, they should set themselves the task of happiness together at whatever cost of self-denial. Even if they find that they are not altogether well mated, when once they have entered the marriage state they should determine, by the help of Christ, to live happily together.

Longfellow, in one of his poems, tells of passing through a garden, and seeing under a tree, on the ground, a fallen bird's nest, torn, and full of ruin. But looking up into the tree, he saw the uncomplaining birds busy there amid the branches, building a new nest for themselves.

The patient birds teach a lesson to any whose first attempts at wedded happiness have failed. Their nest seems to be in ruin; but they should rise and build anew, making another nest of beauty instead of the one which has been spoiled.

IV.

THE WEDDING-RING.

THE wedding-ring, given and received, is the token or pledge of faithfulness. The man in giving the ring binds himself by all that is holy and sacred to be a true husband to the woman to whom he gives it, until death shall separate them. The woman who receives the ring in like manner binds herself to be a true and faithful wife to the man from whom she accepts it. The ring is to both of them the seal of the holy covenant. Every woman who wears a wedding-ring is by this token set apart from all other women. Every time she sees the golden circlet upon her hand, if she is a true woman, she will remember the holy covenant into which she has entered.

There is danger that too often the sacredness of marriage is not understood by those who enter it. The words of the ceremony declare that marriage is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Not all who take upon themselves the solemn vows do it in this serious way. Too many marry without one sober thought about what they are doing. Two young persons meet, are attracted the one to the other, go together a longer or shorter time, "fall in love," become engaged. Then in a little while they are united in marriage. They have never thought the matter through seriously. They have not asked

whether they are suited to each other or not. They have gone blindly into marriage. Is it any wonder that oftentimes such marriages are sad failures?

Yet God's plan for every marriage is happiness. Home is meant to be a miniature of heaven, a fragment of the celestial blessedness let down into this world. It is meant to be a little sanctuary, into which husband and wife may flee from earth's storms and dangers, where in love's shelter, their hearts fed with affection's daily bread, they may dwell in quiet peace. It is meant to be a conservatory in which, covered from the frosts of the world and shielded from its cold and tempests, two lives may grow together into richest beauty, realizing their sweetest dreams of happiness, blending in whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, and attaining the finest possibilities of character. It is meant to be a holy ark, floating on the wild floods of human life like Noah's ark on the deluge, bearing to heaven's gates, to the harbor of glory, the lives which God has shut within its doors. A true home is a little nook in the very bosom of God, where faithful souls are held close to the Father-heart, and carried safely, amid dangers and sorrows, to the home above. Longfellow, in his "Golden Mile-stone," thus pictures home:—

By the fireside there are peace and comfort,
Wives and children, with fair thoughtful faces,
Waiting, watching
For a well-known footstep in the passage.

Each man's chimney is his golden mile-stone;
Is the central point, from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him.

In his farthest wanderings still he sees it;
Hears the talking flame, the answering night-wind
As he heard them
When he sat with those who were, but are not.

In order to insure the happiness and the blessing to which God designs marriage to lead, two things are necessary. One is, care and prayer in choosing; the other is, care and prayer after marriage.

The secret of happiness in wedded life lies in great degree back in the days before marriage. Much depends upon wisdom in choosing.

Hasty marriages should be avoided. Ofttimes the unhappiness of after-days would have been avoided if more time had been taken to consider the matter, if the heart had waited on the head. In some things we may experiment, and if we find that we have made a mistake we can try again; but marriage is "till death us do part." The bond can be broken only by the wrecking of the life and the blighting of its fairest hopes. A step that involves such vital and holy interests, and is so irrevocable, should be entered upon only with the utmost seriousness and the most careful thought.

It has been the tendency to look upon women who do not marry with a sort of amiable pity, as if they had missed the prize in life. But ofttimes the reason

for their not marrying is because they will not accept a man into whose face they could not look with pride, and on whose arm they could not lean with implicit confidence. Such women are to be honored for their self-respect, their courage, and their womanly dignity. They appreciate the seriousness of marriage, and believe it to be, not a prize, not a blessing, but a mistake, a misfortune, a desecration, unless the man be in the highest degree worthy, and unless the union be a true union of hearts, in which two lives blend in perfect accord.

No marriage engagement should be made without earnest prayer. We need God's guidance at every point in life, but in no other experience should young people be more sure of the divine direction and blessing than in choosing and deciding regarding marriage. The engagement which God does not approve is not a fit one.

The breaking of an engagement sometimes brings great sorrow to a gentle heart; but when anything which seems to be inevitable interferes with a plan for marriage, it is better to acquiesce without complaint, for if the hand of God be in it, there must be a reason for it. There is a story of a falconer, who, returning weary and thirsty from his hawking, stopped under a crag, where clear, cold water dripped drop by drop from the rock, and filled his cup. As he was raising it to his lips his falcon dashed it from his hand. Again he waited for the cup to fill, but again the bird struck it down. A third time this was repeated. Then the falconer in anger killed the bird,

and sent his servant up to the spring in the crag to fill the cup there. The servant found a deadly serpent in the water, and hastened back to report to his master. Then the falconer saw why the bird three times had dashed from his lips the cup which contained death. When the cup of wedded happiness is struck from the hand of a young person, it were better not to complain. No one can tell what poison or what bitterness there may have been in it, or how merciful was the hand that smote it down.

The sacredness of marriage requires also that after the holy bond has been formed it shall be cherished with all tenderness. It does not necessarily follow that every wedding ceremony is a gate to happiness and blessedness. An unwatched marriage will never become a deeply happy one. The two, though united, do not become really one; they still remain two, with lives distinct, and they are apt to grow farther and farther apart. At the best, it is not easy, even when love is deep and strong, to become truly married. It takes much sacrifice of desire, of will, of pleasure, of feeling. If both insist upon always having their own way, they will never be really married. They must be ready to yield their own pleasure continually. That is what love does, or it is not love at all.

This is one of the first lessons that must be learned after the wedding-day. Young people imagine that their love is so strong there never can be any difference between them, any frictions, anything but ecstatic bliss in each other's company. But the illusion vanishes when they begin to live together. They find

that their undisciplined natures clash; both are wilful, both are exacting. Each expects the other to yield and serve, but neither is ready to do the yielding and serving. Until each is ready to give up, to forget self, to minister in all ways, there is no real marriage. A ceremony marries no happy couple. The ceremony may take them through the formalities of a marriage contract, and may make them legally husband and wife; but it does not marry them. Their marriage may have been begun long before they stand at the altar — their lives may have been in process of blending, growing together — but it must go on afterward, until the twain are really one in all their life, united in all their thoughts, purposes, feelings, and desires. This takes time, and it is not easy.

A bride of a year pointed one day to an illuminated card which stood upon her mantel-piece, and said, "That card saved my home." Then she told how in the first days after her marriage, she and her husband seemed unable to get on sweetly together. They were in continual friction. Each affected the other in an unkindly way. The young wife was sadly disheartened, and began to feel that her marriage was a dismal mistake and that she should never be happy.

One day at luncheon, something had gone wrong — the conversation had ended in angry words. The husband had gone to his business in a vexed mood, without the usual tender leave-taking; and the wife went up-stairs, sobbing as if her heart would break. As she entered her room her eye fell upon the little card. She had never really noticed the words before,

but now they flashed into her soul with a wondrous power: "What would Jesus do?" The weeping woman found herself trying to answer the question. What would Jesus do if he were in her place? He certainly would not do as she had been doing since her wedding-day. He would not have been exacting, wilful, sensitive, irritable. He would have been patient, gentle, kindly.

The outcome of it all was that the young wife's attitude toward her husband was altogether changed. When he came home in the evening he found a new woman waiting for him. Love had taken its old place again — no longer a selfish love, but a love thoughtful, ready to yield and to serve. She told him of the lesson she had learned, and then he learned it too. They bowed side by side at God's feet, and their hearts flowed together in love and prayer. From that night there was no more wilful desire in either to be ministered unto, but each sought to minister to the other. All their life was ruled now by the test, "What would Jesus do?" The little card had saved their home.

Love is the secret of happy wedded life; nothing else will take its place. There are homes where there is no want for bread, for money, for beautiful things, for luxuries, yet where a woman's heart always aches, where the brightness fades from her fair face, where the shoulders stoop, and where sighs are heard in secret. "Is this all that marriage can give?" she asks in weariness and pain. Yet that good man prides himself on being a model husband, and doing

so much for his wife, — new dresses, diamonds, furs, fine carriages, paintings, society. Yes, but no gentle woman's heart can feed upon these things. Wedded happiness will not survive, even in a palace of delights, if love and tenderness be wanting.

The wife has her part too; neither alone can make the marriage perfect. Even if the husband fail, she must not fail. Many a wife by the sweetness of her spirit, the gentleness of her manner, the unweariedness of her patience, and the richness of her affection, has changed a rough, austere man into something of her own tenderness.

Husband and wife need only to do, along the years, what, with clasped hands at the altar, they solemnly promised each other to do. They took each other for better for worse, and said they would each love and cherish the other. They should keep their mutual vow. The beauty in the wife's face will fade, the glossy hair will turn to white, the graceful form will stoop a little by and by, under the burdens of years. The youthful freshness will vanish, too, from the husband's manly features. Toil, care, and struggle will leave their marks upon him. But in all these changes love should grow only the stronger and tenderer. More and more perfectly should their lives blend as the years pass. They should share their joys; and if burdens and cares come, they should share these too.

There will be sorrows also; but these will only draw closer together lives that are truly wedded. It is a new marriage-day when a baby is born; it is a

new marriage-day also when a child dies, and two lovers sit with clasped hands beside the coffin of their dead. All great experiences, if love be true, become sacraments, drawing hearts closer, knitting souls in ever tenderer union, as together they move toward the sunset gates.

Always it must be remembered that the great master-secret of all deepest, holiest wedded happiness is Christ. There may be a kind of happiness without Christ; but there can be no full, blessed, unbroken joy, if he be left out. Christless wedded happiness is but a rootless flower, which will fade in the hot sun; but when hearts are one in Christ, it is a three-fold cord that binds them together, and their joy is fadeless.

A young wife, only a few months married, was dying. "He will not separate us, we have been so happy," she said. Waking for a moment from a stupor, she saw her husband's woe-worn face bending over her, and caught the sound from his lips of some murmured words of prayer that God would spare her life. "Oh," she whispered, "I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy." Even the happiest love cannot resist death's separating hand. Yet even death can separate only for a little while those who are in Christ, whose loves endure in his higher love. Husband and wife who pray together, who live the same life of Christian service, and cherish the same holy hopes of immortality, are inseparable, and shall walk together on the streets of gold.

“ Comfort one another :

 With a hand-clasp close and tender,
 With the sweetness love can render,
And looks of friendly eyes.
 Do not wait with grace unspoken,
 While life's daily bread is broken :
Gentle speech is oft like manna from the skies.

Comfort one another :

 Let the grave's gloom lie beyond you,
 While the spirit's words remind you
Of the home beyond the tomb ;
 Where no more is pain or parting,
 Fever's flush to tear-drop starting,
But the presence of the Lord, and for all his
 people room.”

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